

Learning for a team  
to achieve the



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## **Learning Outcome 1: Understanding the factors involved in leading a team to achieve agreed objectives.**

### **1. 1. Principles necessary for leading individuals or teams to achieve their objectives.**

The first basic principle necessary for a team to achieve the common objective is the principle of cooperation. Since employees are grouped in one team, they should be aware of the fact that joint action is necessary for accomplishment of their objective. Cooperation among the team members fosters mutual understanding and fosters the achievement of the goal. The second principle vital for the success of the enterprise is both the individual's and the team's flexibility. In the modern world that is developing at enormous rates, people and organizations have to demonstrate unprecedented levels of pliancy in order to survive and thrive.

Throughout a project, the goals may shift and therefore new approaches should be adopted easily. The success of the individual and team activities in an ever-changing competitive environment is defined by the change capacity and resilience. In addition, the principle of high performance culture plays a decisive role for achieving the goals defined. Culture appears to be a most significant driver of behavior and action. Higher levels of employees' loyalty, involvement, and positive attitude are stimulated by a well-established performance culture of the organization. Therefore, high performance culture should be the key principle of functioning for the individual, team, and company.

## 1. 2.

### **Links between individual, team, and organizational objectives.**

Ideally, the objectives set by the organization should correlate to the individual accomplishments of the employees. In addition to that, the satisfaction received by each individual member of the group and the satisfaction enjoyed by the team on the whole is the higher once not only the individual or team goals but also the organizational objectives are achieved. As well as the whole organization, the team must be clearly aware of the objective before them, and each individual within that team should have a stimulus not only for achieving the organizational or team objective but also to demonstrating individual professional growth. And once those motivated individuals are united into an inspired team, their common efforts should be directed at the greater good of the whole organization. An important motivator to success on all levels can be found in demonstrating the historical connection between the organizational performances and the corresponding activities of the working teams and individuals. Once a group of individuals combine their unique skills, knowledge, experiences, and expectations for productive teamwork, the objectives of the whole organization are easier to realize provided that adequate management and leadership skills are applied (Harris, 2003, p. 110).

### **1. 3. Methods of communicating objectives to the team or individual.**

Communicating the work objectives is one of the basic preconditions to get the work done. The method chosen for communicating objectives depends on the time and resource availability, as well as on the scale of the objectives set before the employees. There exists a wide range of methods of communicating objectives, and among them intranet and e-mail messages

occupy one of the leading places now that technology achievements have boosted communication opportunities. The advantage of using intranet or e-mail messages is that it is quite time and effort saving, since there is no need to organize a big meeting and to face a possible debate. However, for the purposes of greater cooperation and understanding when a complex and multifaceted goal is faced, it is advisable to utilize another method of communicating objectives, such as a team briefing or meeting.

The latter methods provide much more opportunity for both visual and verbal elaboration of objectives set before the individuals or teams. In addition, an invaluable opportunity for dialogue and direct discussion emerges once employees gather for a team briefing. By facilitating a two-way feedback, managers ensure that the objective is perceived, comprehended, and understood by the employees. Thus, the interactivity of a team briefing is well worth spending additional time and effort on such a meeting.

## **Learning Outcome 2: Understanding the current competencies of individuals and teams.**

### **2. 1. Methods of conducting individual and team competency reviews.**

For measuring team competency, a Dyers Team Competencies Scale is applicable. On a scale ranging from 1 to 5, the following factors are considered: “ ability to set clear, measurable goals; developing commitment within team members to achieve team goals; making assignments that are clearly understood by all team members; knowledge of how to develop the skills in team members to accomplish their assignments; knowledge of how to effectively make decisions; appropriate participation in, acceptance, and

implementation of decisions with commitment; encouragement of high-performance standards and holding team members accountable; running effective meetings; building trust among team members; appropriate team leader's management style; fostering open and free communications; managing conflict effectively; giving and receiving feedback without becoming defensive or combative; collaborating with others; supportiveness and helpfulness of the team leaders and members toward one another; willingness to take a risk and try out new actions to make the team better; stopping and critiquing how well the team members are working together; necessary team-building skills to identify the team problems and take corrective action" (Dyer, 2007, pp. 65–71). In this scale, the twelve team competencies are measured and gaps in any of them becomes obvious once each team member has accessed the performance according to the scale.

A method of assessing individual competency can be found in a Competency Ontology that correlates the employee with such factors as competencies, other employees, jobs, learning objects etc. Fig. 1. Competency Ontology. Source: Draganidis, Fotis et al. (2006) An ontology based tool for competency management and learning paths.

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## **2. 2. Links between current competencies, the team, and organizational objectives.**

At first sight, the relations between the current competencies of the team and their performance in respect to the organizational objectives should be direct. But in fact, it turns out that this relation is much more complicated and indirect than it might seem.

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Logically, since the employees of the company increase their professional skills, the level of their performance should also be expected to grow. Thus, organizations employing professionals with high level of skills are expected to demonstrate outstanding achievements on the organizational level. However, the situation may be quite different from this logical reckoning. Despite all the deep knowledge, excellent skills, and wide range of abilities possessed by an individual employee, his/her performance may be much lower than expected. The reason for this may be found in a whole range of personal and professional factors, such as personal discomfort, lack of concentration, dissatisfaction with the job or the processes occurring at the organization, disagreement with the objectives of the organization, etc. These misbalancing factors may result in poorer performance of the individual, and subsequently of the whole team. Therefore, it is not always the case that high competencies of individuals and teams directly advantage organizational objectives.

### **2. 3. Activities that support competency development now, and future competency development to achieve organizational objectives.**

In order to secure productive work among the team members and thus ensure achievement of organizational objectives in the future, it is crucial to develop collaboration within the team. For this purpose, it is vital to establish trustful relations with the employees, asking for their suggestions and opinions and listen to fully understand. Additionally, discussions of how team meetings and actions relate to the team and organizational objective should be carried out. Interaction with colleagues and sharing the available resources should facilitate the joint work on achieving the objectives.

For realizing the principle of flexibility, it is vital to prepare the individual employees and the team to the possible changes. For this purpose, it is necessary to identify the aspects about the working responsibilities and procedures that are likely to change within the nearest future and decide the ways the working process can be modified to painlessly include the coming changes. When the change situation comes, an initiative response should be made, and efforts should be undertaken to help the other team members accept and manage the change. In order to be better ready for the coming change, it is advisable to analyze the working environment and single out the issues that demand updating or improving. By starting to make small changes now, it is possible to ensure that the future change is met more efficiently.

### **Learning Outcome 3: Knowing how to develop the competencies of individuals and teams.**

#### **3. 1. Development opportunities for individuals and teams.**

In the modern competitive environment, both individuals and teams should seek every opportunity for development of their competencies in order to be able to withstand the stress of their work and to achieve the objectives of their organizations. One of the perfect opportunities for developing individual and team competencies is taking up special assignments or responsibilities that presuppose active implementation of one or another competence. For example, assignments should be chosen so that they provide an individual employee or a team of employees with a challenging opportunity to grow.

In choosing such assignments, decisions should be based on a careful assessment of the employee's readiness to efficiently undertake new

responsibilities or changes. The latter should be appropriate to the employee's level of development and neither put too much overload on him/her, nor appear too easy for any efficient growth. Another opportunity for developing individual and team competencies is referring employees to workshops and trainings that presuppose cooperation within cross-function teams.

The latter type of cooperation is one of the most difficult to manage and yet one of the most required nowadays. Therefore, it would be the more instructive for the employees to gain the experience of managing cooperation within such a cross-function team.

### 3. 2.

#### **Methods used to agree on development opportunities.**

The methods of agreeing on the development opportunities to be undertaken by the team may vary depending on the situation. The simplest way is to simply notify the team of the upcoming developmental event.

However, this method would hardly prove successful and bring forward much enthusiasm since it would not demonstrate any personal interest in the success of the undertaking. A much more efficient way of coming to agreement on the development opportunity is calling a meeting where the presenter should not mention the opportunity directly but should formulate the upcoming event as rather an exciting opportunity for the employees to reveal their skills and talents which have not been utilized before. Such approach would attract the employees much more and would stimulate them to do their best during the development opportunity, thus resulting in achievement of the development aim.



### 3.3.

#### **Processes for measuring and reviewing the success of the individual and team development objectives.**

One of the most efficient processes for measuring and reviewing the success of the development objectives is the analysis of developmental event in form of a round-table discussion. During this discussion it is significant that constructive feedback from all the participants is provided in an appropriate way, specifically and constructively. Care should be taken that not the people but the ideas are criticized, if necessary. It is highly advisable that positive feedback is given openly and publicly, and improvement feedback is given in private. Among the criteria that should be measured when reviewing the development objectives are the individual input and contribution during cross-function team projects; supportive behavior provided to others to achieve their individual activities that would benefit the team objective during the project; activities for developing and sharing the knowledge necessary for successful completion of the project.

#### **Reflective statement.**

Undertaking this assignment has triggered ideas about developing the competencies necessary for efficient work of individuals within teams. A deeper understanding of the processes and actions involved in teamwork has been gained, and a conclusion has been made on the necessity to work on team improvement.

#### **References**

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